**Chapter 1**

Differentiated practice is essential to success of individuals in the classroom. It is important for students to understand that his/her needs are important, and that these needs will try to be met by he educators. Differentiated practice can also introduce students to new ideas of learning, and they may even find a new method that works better for them than any other method they may have used in the past. The author defines differentiated instructions as, “doing what’s fair for students. It’s a collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize students’ learning at every turn, including giving them the tools to handle anything that is undifferentiated.” This idea plays into the title, *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, very well. What is fair for all students does not necessarily mean that all students will get equal attention or individualized help from the teacher. What is fair is to provide all students with the opportunity to learn, and also to provide them with the appropriate resources they might need to learn what needs to be learned. We also need to recognize when a student is or is not being challenged in the classroom. As educators, it is our job to make sure students are always facing challenging tasks and information, for this will help to foster their ability to learn. Successful educators must foster strong relationships with students in order to understand their individual and specific needs in the classroom. Having these relationships will also help the educator to identify when a student is or is not being challenged, and will help the educator to come up with something that will challenge all students.

**Chapter 2**

There is a distinct difference between being able to complete a task, and understanding how or why the outcome is what it is. As educators, we must focus too much on the ability to complete a task with the right answer because standardized tests to not take the amount of work into account. Demonstrating the process and checking for actual understanding will be the key to the students maintaining the ability to complete a specific task later in the future. The author writes, “students have mastered content when they demonstrate a thorough understanding as evidence by doing something substantive with the content beyond merely echoing it. Anyone can repeat information; it’s the masterful student who can break content into its component pieces, explain it and alternative perspectives regarding it cogently to others, and use it purposefully in new situations.” The example given by the author referencing the ability to make successful passes in a basketball game, is a great comparison. If the player does not understand the game in a way that he/she understands the use of each pass, the player will always make the same pass regardless of the outcome. Much like if a students does not understand the purpose and the steps of a task, he/she will not be able to make proper adjustments throughout the process to complete the task successfully.

**Chapter 3**

Students easily build up a bias towards certain content areas in school. This bias can occur for several reasons; students may not have achieved success in a certain area, may have had a bad experience with a teacher, or may just not have enjoyed a certain topic within that content area. All of these situations are situations we as teachers will have to face in our classrooms. Rick Stiggins said, “students can hit any target they can see and which stands still for them.” This means that students are more willing to put in the work to understand the concept when they are able to understand a clear point or reason for needing to learn the information. This general understanding of student’s desire for reason will help to influence the success of a certain lesson within a classroom. Showing the students the end result will make the lesson that much more real to them. By showing students the final exam on a particular topic may help them to understand what it is they are supposed to be getting out of the lesson, and that the lesson as a whole does have a purpose. Additionally, it is the role of the teacher to understand the main concepts of a unit, and what lessons will be essential to teaching the information. When a student understands that the teacher has taken the time to carefully select assignments to help them achieve the ultimate goal, they will be much more likely to want to do well on the assignment and to really understand the information.

**Chapter 4**

Portfolios are a collective way to keep track of the work and progress of all students. By using portfolios, students are able to reflect on their own work, and are able to comment and reflect on their progress throughout the process. The process of portfolios also allows teachers to differentiate instruction for all students. Allowing students to have some control over their work and their success will help them to become more successful, and for them to make better progress. Students will also be able to be more successful if they clearly understand what is expected of them. Rubrics can help students to understand the expectations of every assignment. Understanding every assignment will help students to understand their progress throughout their process. In order to allow the students to successfully understand rubrics, they will need to be “student friendly.” We as teachers need to ask ourselves how and what we are trying to tell and teach each of the students. Designing a rubric is key to helping students to succeed and make progress in the classroom. It is important to “identify the essential and enduring content and skills you will expect students to demonstrate.” It is also important to identify the “content and skills” students have been able to master through the process. A method to test the success of a rubric is to use existing work to test and formulate a successful rubric. This may take some time and effort, but the end product will be good student work and understanding that will help the student’s progress throughout their learning.

**Chapter 5**

Tiering is referred to as “how teachers adjust assignments and assessments according to students’ readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles.” It is important that students understand what it is that is expected of them; the students are expected to meet the standard with proficiency. This means that meeting the standard is the minimum performance. Expecting students to strive will either make or break them. I am unsure about how successful this idea would allow students to be. For students that strive under pressure, this method may help to produce their best and most successful pieces of work. On the other hand, students who fall short when it comes to performance, and succeed more when they are allowed time to complete an assignment, may fail under the pressure of the teachers expectations. We must understand how successful students are, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. Understanding these factors will allow the teacher to be able to base their assessment on what they already know about the student’s strength and weaknesses. Increasing the complexity of an assignment may not always be in the best interest of all students. There should be ways to adjust assignments to be able to benefit all students. It is our job as educators to be able to make decisions that will allow for students to be successful with the progress of their work. Understanding these factors will allow for the teacher to be able to better evaluate the progress of each individual student. Students need to have strong relationships with their teachers if they are going to be able to understand the methods and ideologies of their teachers.

**Chapter 6**

Students should not have to guess what the teacher is asking them. In order to assess students on their ability and knowledge, assessment questions need to be worded in a way that allow students to be successful and confident in their own abilities. Using a variety of prompts and assessments will allow for the students to be more confident in their abilities, and will also give the teacher a better understanding of what it is that the students feel they are good at, and what it is that they might need help with. Using a variety of questions and prompts will give the students a chance to be successful when doing assessments. “Forced choice” questions are questions in which the students must chose from answers, as opposed to students creating their own answer. Both types of questions should be included in every successful assessment. Giving students both types of questions will allow students to keep their minds active, by providing a variety of test formations. This will allow for the teacher to see what the students have mastered for information, and what areas their comfort levels may fall into in regards to assessment. Also, it is important to provide little room for unnecessary errors, such as providing “T’s” and “F’s” as opposed to allowing students to write their own letters as an answer. This will allow for students to be as successful as possible by providing them the opportunity to be successful.

**FIAE Chapter 5**

**Abstract:**

Chapter 5 of *Fair Isn't Always Equal*, introduces the idea of tiering instruction. [Tiering instruction](http://iss.gstboces.org/ctice/trainings/di/strategies/tiered.htm) is specific to each individual student. It is important to look at the lower information as foundational as opposed to looking at the lower information as poor quality. Tiering instruction is essential to allowing students to achieve his/her best work in any content area. Because students may struggle with particular content areas, it is especially important that all intelligences are recognized, and that a plan is made for all abilities in the classroom. The chapter defines tiering as, “primarily emphasizing the adjustments we make in assessments according to students’ readiness levels, not interests or learner profiles" (56). This is where fostering positive relationships with all students comes in to play. Without having a solid relationship and understanding of all students, it will be virtually impossible for any teacher to incorporate tiering instruction in to the classroom successfully. It might be easier to include tiering into our every day classrooms, but it is far more difficult to include these steps into creating assessment. What is fair is not always what is equal, right?

**Synthesis:**

Cole described tiering as, "essentially a scale designed to best accommodate all levels of a students." The overall conclusion is that everyone agrees that tiering should be incorporated into every classroom. That would be too easy though, wouldn't it? Tyler B. wrote, "I can also consider how being too forward about the purpose of tiering in a classroom can lead to certain students feeling demeaned, and other students feeling nervous about displaying their aptitude in front of lesser prepared students." Matt also recognized this difficulty by saying, "a [challenge](http://challengebychoice.wordpress.com/tiered-instruction-and-assessment/)presents itself however, because I will have to some how get all my students on the same page by the end of each lesson." It will be difficult to create lessons that will be effective for every student in every classroom situation. One aspect that I think a lot of people seemed to have missed, is the fact that there is another end of the spectrum in the idea of tiering instruction. Ashley L. noted this by writing, "tiering does not make things unfair for those students that already have mastered the skill or task." We often choose to focus too much on those students who are not at such an advanced level, and we do not do enough for the students who have acquired mastery of a certain topic. It is important to focus on students in all areas of tiering, as it is often difficult for every student to recognize his/her abilities, it is important for the teacher to understand the students at all ends of tiering instruction.

